

Approved For Release 2005/07/01 : CIA-RDP91-00901R000700090021-2

U.S. Said to Fear Lisbon Shift to Left

By Miguel Acoca
Special to The Washington Post

LISBON—Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, apparently skeptical of U.S. Embassy reports from here minimizing the peril of a Communist takeover in Portugal, sent high-level intelligence and diplomatic experts to this Iberian country recently to make independent evaluations.

Informed sources said that Kissinger dispatched Lt. Gen. Vernon Walters, deputy director of the Central Intelligence Agency, to Lisbon in August for a "personal appraisal." The general, who speaks excellent Portuguese and is considered a specialist on Portugal, was in Lisbon from August 9 to 12 for meetings with high government officials and senior U.S. embassy staffers.

The CIA would not comment on the persistent reports of Walters' visit, refusing even to confirm that it took place. A CIA spokesman said that the agency never comments on the travels of its top personnel.

Two weeks ago, Kissinger sent a four-man State Department mission to Lisbon for still another independent review of Portugal's future course, the sources said. The group, headed by Alan Lukens, director of the department's Iberian section, included Robert Ryan, a department monetary expert, and Michael Samuels, an authority on Portugal's African colonies. The identity of the fourth mission member was not disclosed.

The pro-Soviet Portuguese Communist Party has become an important factor in Portugal since the right-wing, pro-U.S. dictatorship which ruled Portugal for 48 years was deposed in April. The young military officers who have been running the country since then have given the Communists a Cabinet post and full participation in the country's new military-controlled government. Much of the strength and popularity of the Communists derives from their long underground fight against the dictatorship, which had outlawed the party.

While nothing could be learned of the thrust of Walters' report to Kissinger, sources said that the Lukens group diverged from the embassy's appraisal. The extent of the differences was not disclosed, but sources said that the embassy's reporting had grown more cautious as a result.

The sources said that Kissinger and others in Washington were obsessed with the fear that Portugal will be the first country to go Communist in what was called "a southern Europe domino theory" also involving Spain, Italy and Greece. This fear apparently has been fed by pessimistic intelligence assessments, press reports stressing the power of the left in Portugal, and the anxieties of multinational companies with interests in Portugal and its African colonies.

Washington apparently fears that the emergence of the Portuguese Communists following the fall of the dictatorship will be duplicated in neighboring Spain, the last remaining pro-American rightist government in Western Europe.

Since his visit to Portugal, Walters has also been in Spain for secret talks with high Spanish officials, the sources said. The CIA deputy director's latest visit reportedly took place two weeks ago when he had a briefing on Portugal with senior Spanish military and civilian authorities.

Spanish and U.S. officials are known to be concerned by the potential for Communist infiltration from Portugal, which has a long and hard-to-guard border with Spain. The Communist Party has been banned in Spain since the end of the civil war in 1939, but it has remained a major clandestine political force in industrial urban centers and the backbone of opposition to Generalissimo Francisco Franco.

Another recent visitor to Spain was William Colby, the CIA's director, but sources said that he had merely stopped in Madrid on his way east. One source, however, pointed out that visits to Iberia by

high U.S. intelligence official began to appear throughout Lisbon as the crisis developed, and walls were sprayed with anti-CIA slogans.

Many Portuguese rightists who fled following the populist military coup in April are now living in exile in Madrid. Some have been beating a path to the U.S. embassy in Madrid to lobby for their views and to plead for help in preventing a Communist takeover.

Conservatives and moderates still living in Portugal are also said to be seeking to influence the United States.

Informed sources here said that during Walters' visit in August, he met with Gen. Antonio de Spinola, then provisional president. At the time, Spinola, a conservative, was locked in a struggle for power with populist Premier Vasco Goncalves and the coordinating committee of the Armed Forces Movement.

Spinola resigned Sept. 20 after failing to win a bid for one-man rule and martial-law powers. He sought to curb Communist activities and the leftist-controlled press and to increase his control over the decolonization of Portugal's African colonies.

Both U.S. and Portuguese government sources have privately confirmed Walters' meeting with Spinola, and a subsequent conference with Gen. Francisco da Costa Gomes, the armed forces chief who succeeded Spinola.

High-ranking revolutionary military officers have claimed repeatedly that there are at least 100 CIA agents operating in Portugal, striving to create "another Chile."

The news that Walters had been in Portugal, reported in August and September in the Portuguese press, aggravated the fears of leftists of a rightist counter coup during the crisis which culminated in Spinola's resignation.

Rightists took the visit to mean that United States was casting its lot with Spinola and his ideas.

Leaflets and posters linking the CIA with Portuguese right

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